ANCIENT SKIES

"Come Search With Us!"

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MYSTERIES OF ANCIENT EGYPT

BY ERICH VON DANIKEN*

As we all know, Jesus Christ was crucified in Jerusalem 2000 years ago. Why do we know this? Silly question - everybody knows it. There are written records - the Holy Gospels. There are thousands of cathedrals, churches and chapels around the world with sculptures representing the crucified Jesus. Is this not enough to prove that Jesus was crucified on Earth? The thousands of architects of cathedrals and artists who created wonderful structures and sculptures were not eye-witnesses of Jesus's life.Neither Michaelangelo nor any Pope was present at the Lord's last supper and not one artist of the last 1900 years listened to the sermon on the mount; but they all without exception have become instruments of the tradition.

Jesus himself left not one single object which we can see in a museum; he wrote not one single letter nor left his signature on any document. Isn't it incredible that on the one hand there is absolutely no direct evidence for the life and death of Jesus, and yet on the other hand the fact of his crucifixion is never doubted?

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Once upon a time humanoid beings existed somewhere in our galaxy. They had an advanced technology and on their home planet it all started similarly to our own. First, they developed small vehicles which could shoot small parts of a space station into an orbit. Then came a spacelab which became larger and larger until finally it was a gigantic platform, some sort of small space city. Like on Earth, the space city of the extraterrestrials was very expensive and, therefore, the community up there produced different articles which were manufacturable only in space. These goods were sold to their own mother planet and after two generations the space city was paid for and the inhabitants became its owners.

This space-city did not belong to any country of their planet,but was a free and independent community in space with its own religion and political system. But one day the majority of the population of the space colony decided to leave their planetary system. They were searching for adventure in outer space.Maybe they were a religious community feeling the missionary urge to bring the message of their universal god to other possible civilizations.Every scientist and technician in their space-city knew that it was impossible to accelerate their colony to a high speed. Therefore, they decided to use the space-city as a slow motion generation spaceship. Love, life and death were a daily theme on board; new generations came and died, while the space colony was slowly floating through the universe. With a speed of only two percent of the speed of light they covered ten light-years in every 500 of Earth's years.

After a journey of perhaps ten generations, the space colony entered a new solar-system. Everybody on board was very happy because they knew that here they would find new raw material, new sources of energy, fresh water and, naturally, fresh food of all kinds.Even though the space colonists being humanoids, they had - of course! - not the same stomachs as we have.They were used to different kinds of food and the minerals and bacteria in their liquids were not exactly the same as in our water.

For the space colonists a hectic time began. One group was searching for raw material and food, another group was probably repairing some small damage to the generation spaceship. The group that was looking for food and raw material was very lucky; they discovered a planet filled with organic material, with animals of all kinds and with primitive intelligent beings. These primitive beings were very impressed by the extraterrestrials. The natives were frightened and did not understand what was going on. The spacemen, however, studied the primitive beings, like ethnologists would do on our planet, and as a kind of intellectual aid to developing countries they taught the natives in different fields. And because of their special requirements regarding food, the geneticists of the space colonists started a genetic program with different animals. Some animals were crossed and others were newly created by genetic engineering.(1)

After a few generations the space colony's tanks were filled with raw material, fresh liquids and food of all kinds and everything was ready for a renewed space journey. Before leaving, they promised the natives that after a long, long time they would return to this point in the universe.

Did something like this happen in mankind's past? Were our ancestors visited from outer space? And, above all, what does my science-fiction story have in common with Jesus?

In both cases we have no direct proof to substantiate the story. Like Jesus, the extraterrestrials left no written documents, no signatures and no direct traces of their visit. How then could we prove that they were here? In exactly the same way that we

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*This article is based upon Mr. von Daniken's presentation at the 16th Anniversary World Conference of the Ancient Astronaut Society which was held in Chicago in August, 1989.

For a quarter of a century Erich von Daniken and his first book Chariots of the Gods? have enjoyed tremendous popularity with the public throughout the world. His 14 books on the ancient astronaut theme have been translated into 36 languages and have sold over 50 million copies to date. Mr. von Daniken's popularity continues unabated in the German-speaking countries of Europe and he has now five best-selling books in the German language which have not been published in English.

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have proved the crucifixion of Jesus. Our ancestors, some thousands and thousands of years ago, handed down by word-of-mouth the story of the visit from outer space. Then these stories were committed to writing and there are hundreds of written records, not written by the extraterrestrials,but by priests, so-called prophets and eye-witnesses. Anyone who has ever seriously studied the holy traditions of our ancestors cannot deny that an extraterrestrial visitation to Earth occurred in the remote past. Like the artists who were influenced by the gospels created wonderful paintings, sculptures, great cathedrals and churches; artists before Christ constructed incredible temples, pyramids and sculptures in memory of and to honor the extraterrestrials, who were called "the gods," because mankind had no other word in those days to describe ones who travelled in space.

When I ask an archæologist why our ancestors constructed gigantic temples and structures, the answer always is: "for the gods." For what gods? "Well, the gods in nature, the gods in the lightning, the thunder, the gods in the earthquakes, or simply the sun, which they worshipped as a god."

Wonderful. So the starting point for the old religions was nature.I do not doubt that in many cases religious faith began as a result of natural phenomena which the primitive people did not understand. But this answer does not explain my strongest counter argument: Since when does nature speak? Since when does the lightning or the thunder give commandments? Since when does any form of natural catastrophe say to one of our forefathers: "Now, you being, take your pencil and write"? And all of a sudden we are left with only two possibilities:

First, these eye-witnesses, these prophets, were all liars. They were the science-fiction authors of their time. In fact nobody gave them information, nobody spoke to them. If we take this position as a solution, then I seriously ask: why have we built our major religions upon lying prophets?

Secondly, if we accept that somebody spoke to our ancestors, that somebody gave them information, left instructions, then the next question is: Who? The almighty God? As for myself, I am a deep believer in the concept of god, in a concept of creation. I am not an atheist at all. But, the one god in which I believe is omnipotent, almighty and he certainly does not need any vehicle to move around.

Most of us who are educated in Christianity are not very familiar with the holy books of the central American Indians, of the Tibetans, or of the other people who live in the Himalayan region. I have studied some of these traditions and I have spoken with many of the scholars of these traditions. The case is clear. The old Indians talk about gigantic cities which once circled in orbits around the Earth. Such space cities are even described in vivid detail and in several colors. From these cities smaller vehicles, called "vimanas" landed on Earth. The teachers descended from heaven. The same stories are handed down all over the world. I wrote 14 books on this subject. So I am coming back to the same old questions: Who spoke in antiquity to mankind? Who gave information to mankind? Who were the so-called gods?

They were definitely extraterrestrials! As easy as it is to prove that Jesus lived on Earth and was crucified, it is just as easy to prove that extraterrestrials visited our planet. In the Chinese mythology it is recorded that the heavenly emperors descended in a chariot from the sky. In Central America, Quetzalcoatl (or Kukulkan) was the descending teacher from heaven. Entire cities, for example Tulum and Chichen Itza in the Yucatan Peninsula, were devoted to and constructed for the descending gods. Hundreds of sculptures and temples all over the world sing the song of these heavenly teachers, the masters, who descended to mankind. Even the space cities are described. And still today many tribes worship the teachers from heaven, such as the Hopi Indians in the USA with their Kachina dolls. As you know,the Kachinas were originally nothing other than descending gods. Or, again, the Kayapo Indians who live on the upper Amazon River in Brazil, who year after year worship their teacher from the sky in a special straw garment which looks very much like a space suit.

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Everyone has seen pictures of the Great Pyramid at Giza in Egypt, or has visited it personally. Are there still mysteries concerning the pyramid or are all the questions now answered? We shall see.

None of the designers, architects, craftsmen, nor a priest or a pharaoh, has left one single word about the construction of the Great Pyramid. Not even a little inscription tells us who made it and how. The Egyptologists, who should know, tell us that Cheops was the architect of the Great Pyramid, but how do they know this?

The Greek historian Herodotus, who visited Egypt in the summer of 448BC wrote that a tyrannical pharaoh with the name of Cheops built the Great Pyramid in 20 years with the help of 100,000 slaves. But curiously enough all the other historians from antiquity, who also visited Egypt 2000 years ago, know nothing of a name like Cheops. Cajus Plinius Secundus, a Roman historian, especially mentions the names of all the other historians who had published some thesis about the pyramid before him. After that he wrote: "None of them knows the name of the builder of the Great Pyramid."

In this single case the archaeologists rely fully on the statement of Herodotus, although when this same historian gives us other information, they do not believe a word of it.

For example, in his second book Herodotus wrote that the priests of Thebes in middle Egypt showed him 341 statues and that these 341 statues represent 11,340 years. Herodotus especially confirms these dates, because the high priest explained to him that each one of the 341 statues represents one generation of priests. And he also says that before these 11,340 years the gods had visited mankind and that the gods instructed the priests in mathematics, geometry and astronomy. Naturally, the archaeologists do not believe Herodotus in this case.

As Zecharia Sitchin has proved conclusively in his book The Stairway to Heaven (2), Cheops was definitely not the builder of the Great Pyramid and what really should make us very suspicious is this: In none of the halls in the Great Pyramid, in none of the rooms, neither in the Grand Gallery nor in any large or small corridor has any inscription been discovered. How can a pharaoh construct the greatest pyramid on Earth without even mentioning his own name in a little hieroglyphic? The anonimity of the construction does not fit the character of its architect. If Pharaoh Cheops was vain, even a tyrant and oppressor who, according to Herodotus, exploited 100,000 slaves for the construction of the Great Pyramid, then every wall would praise his heroic deeds.

We can turn it around and upside down, but our brain does not understand it. Somebody has suggested that Cheops did not want to be buried in his own pyramid. Why not? His tomb was the most secure in all the world. And in his times grave robbers did not exist. Why should somebody build the greatest and safest pyramid on Earth and then neither use it as his own tomb nor for his publicity. It is simply impossible that a tyrant like Cheops would miss the opportunity to show the world his own glory. Either Cheops lies in his pyramid or the pyramid doesn't belong to Cheops.

I have heard and read that what I am saying is not true because the pyramids are full of inscrip-

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tions and that from these inscriptions the so-called "Book of the Dead" was composed. Just a minute please! Two hundred years after Cheops a pharaoh named "Unas" from the 5th Dynasty reigned in Egypt. His pyramid at Sakkara was only 44 meters high and had a side length of 47 meters. The walls and the tomb of the Unas pyramid were covered with hieroglyphic texts, one after the other from right to left and from the ceiling to the floor.These are the oldest pyramid texts, but not the only ones. Successors to Unas also placed inscriptions in their tombs. But if anyone thinks that these pyramid texts would explain to us who built the Great Pyramid and how it was done, he will be disappointed.

The pyramid texts are poetic writings. The oldest of them inform us about the pharaoh's wish to join his god Re-Atun in space. Archaeologists say that one has to view these texts in a spiritual manner. Do we have to? The pharaoh and his priests had detailed knowledge of their travelling in space, even if it seems childish to us. They did not travel as ghosts, they travelled in a ship.

Pyramid text number 273 of the Unas pyramid in Sakkara explains that the pharaoh will rise up to the sky like in a cloud, where he will find his prepared seat in the ship of the sun-god. Pharaoh Unas is quoted as the leader of the sunship who will ask for help in the darkness of space because the loneliness in the endless depths of the universe is tremendous. How true!

But my diversion to the pyramid texts will not take me away from Cheops. In the case of Cheops there was not one single inscription. There is no statue of Cheops, no pillar to praise him and naturally no mummy of this strange pharaoh. Only an ivory figurine just five centimeters high, which supposedly represents Cheops, is today in the Egyptian museum, although nobody knows for sure if it is Cheops.

All this leads me to the question: If it was not Cheops who constructed the wonder of Giza, then who was it? Egyptologists have established the chronology from Cheops very precisely and there is no room for another pharaoh after Cheops unknown to us. Then if there is nobody after him, then somebody before him built the pyramid. But even thinking of this is unacceptable to Egyptologists - it is a kind of sacrilege. Maybe the historians from the Arabic world can help us. What do they know about the construction of the Great Pyramid?

There are some old historians as well known in the Arab world as Herodotus, Strabo, Diodor and Pliny are known in ours. One of the Arab historians is named Al Masudi; another one is Al Makrizi. These are only the short versions of their names, which in reality would take three lines. Al Masudi and Al Makrizi have written about the Great Pyramid and both historians confirm that a King named Saurid, who was living 300 years before the great flood was the builder of the Great Pyramid. Who was this unknown King Saurid? According to the Arabs, he was also known as Idris, whom the Hebrew people called Enoch. As you know, Enoch is one of the ten patriarchs in the Old Testament before the great flood who left the Earth bodily in a chariot of fire.

The Arab historian Al Makrizi also explains the reason for the construction of the Great Pyramid. King Saurid was warned by the gods that a great flood would destroy the Earth. King Saurid asked the gods if his country would be habitable again after the flood, and he was assured that it would be. Therefore, King Saurid decided to construct the Great Pyramid, and according to the Arab historians the King deposited thousands of scientific books about the gods and the stars, about mathematics and astronomy, and strange objects, in the Pyramid. Objects of "flexible glass" and "weapons which do not rust", as well as messages of the gods for future generations. Could all this be true? Are there still secret chambers in the Great Pyramid?

The first man to enter the Great Pyramid after it was completed and sealed was the Arab Caliph Al Mamoun. This was in the year 823 AD. Al Mamoun knew about the old traditions and he wanted to find the treasure. Did he find anything? I quote from the Arabic book Hitat, written by Al Makrizi:

> "Al Mamoun has opened the Great Pyramid. He entered and found a large room. In the middle of it there was a stairway down to another room which had four doors on every side. In one of the rooms Al Mamoun found the mummified bodies of the sons of Adam. Al Mamoun entered into another room where he found three biers made of glass-like material. On every bier lay a dead body covered with three different suits, and next to each body was a book with unknown letters."

Strangely enough, Al Mamoun also visited the so-called rock-chamber, which is 37 meters beneath the pyramid, which archaeologists call the "unfinished tomb." I was down there. The chamber is really cut out of the rock. In the center of the chamber is a sort of rock-table and a small rock-pillar. To work down there the workmen needed light and air. But 37 meters into the rock below the pyramid there is no air-shaft, say the archaeologists.

The corridor down to this rock-chamber is 118 meters long and is covered with smoothly polished monoliths, which is paradoxical. Logically the corridor should have been finished only after the work was completed down in the rock-chamber,because it would have been impossible to transport the stone material of all kinds through the corridor once it was covered with the polished monoliths. If work on the rock-chamber was stopped in progress, why finish the 118 meters of long corridor and why is there also a 16 meter-long blind shaft rising from the rock-chamber, which shaft is also covered by monoliths?

Arab historians say that down there is a continuation of the corridor to other rooms with strange objects and old books. They even say that between the Sphinx and the Great Pyramid there is a subterranean link.

Are all these just fairy tales from the One Thousand and One Nights?

In 1987 a team of Japanese experts from the Waseda University in Tokyo examined the entire area with a new sort of radar, one which can see through the different qualities of stone. The team was composed of an Egyptologist, an architect, a geophysicist and many specialists in electronics. According to the Japanese research team's report, they detected another chamber behind the King's Chamber, a chamber behind the Queens Chamber, a subterranean tunnel between the Sphinx and the Great Pyramid and traces of a whole labyrinth of chambers and corridors in the Great Pyramid. One of these corridors starts from the northwest wall of the Queens Chamber and measures 42 meters. Another finding of the Japanese crew is already confirmed: a second sunship beneath the rock of the pyramid.

What now? What surprises are to come? How will the scientists react who have always told us that there are no more secrets in the Great Pyramid? Once again it turns out that legends and mythology are much more than just fairy-tales or science-fiction. All indications of today point into the direction that the Great Pyramid is a sort of time capsule filled with information of the past for the future. This information, which has lain in the Great Pyramid for thousands of years, could completely change our whole knowledge of mankind's past and man's evolution. Many individuals and scientific circles will not like this at all!

For several months now the Great Pyramid has been closed to tourists. Officially it has been said that repair work must be done in the pyramid. Due to special connections it was possible for me to enter the pyramid and what I saw was absolutely unbelievable. The Grand Gallery and both the Queen's Chamber and King's Chamber were filled with scaffolds. Certainly not because of repair work. The

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gigantic monoliths in the Grand Gallery and in the King's Chamber have not moved in thousands of years. Repair work? My goodness. I guess that some scientific group is working in there and is digging and drilling in the direction of the newly discovered corridors and chambers. I even guess that a sort of cover-up is going on right now. No journalists, no explorers, not even archaeologists from foreign countries are allowed to enter the pyramid. I am sure that at some future date we will be told that nothing of importance was found in the new chambers.

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Old Egypt is full of mysteries. In a relatively short article like this I can only present a few of them. One of these special mysteries is the sarcophagus of the Pharaoh Sechemhet from the 3rd Dynasty. That is even older than Cheops. Sechemhet ruled between 2611 BC and 2603 BC.

In 1954 AD the archaeologist Zecharia Goneim discovered the entry to a secret tomb deep beneath the rock of Sakkara. The entry was not disturbed and this time it seemed that the archaeologists had won the race against grave-robbers. Twenty-six meters under the rock the archaeologists discovered the King's Chamber, which was still sealed with the seal still intact. In the center of a subterranean hall was a wonderful sarcophagus made of white alabaster. The sarcophagus was closed and sealed and on the upper side of the sarcophagus were traces of some flowers, which obviously a priest or a girl-friend had deposited as a last farewell to the Pharaoh Sechemhet. The traces of flowers were powdered and the archaeologists covered the powder immediately so that no air-breath would blow the powder away. In contrast to other sarcophagi,this one had no cover.It was closed by a sliding trap door, like the ones we see in dungeons. The whole alabaster sarcophagus was made out of one single block of material; really a fantastic piece of art. Unique in its kind and at the same time older than anything else that the Egyptologists had before discovered.

Zecharia Goneim, the Egyptian discoverer of the tomb, was a very honest and sincere person. His students describe him as a friendly and humorous man, who was always ready to crack some jokes. Mr. Goneim had absolutely no doubt that he would find the mummified body of Pharaoh Sechemhet in his closed and sealed sarcophagus.

On May 12, 1954 the Egyptian Institute of Antiquity organized an official opening of the sarcophagus. Journalists and politicians were invited. Slowly, centimeter by centimeter they pushed the sliding door upwards. Once the door was open there was absolute quiet in the subterranean hall. Zecharia Goneim went down on his knees and with an electric light in his hand looked into the sarcophagus. Then he looked again, and again. The sarcophagus was empty. Absolutely nothing and nobody was in there, not even the traces of a mummy or a piece of linen. The journalists and politicians were disappointed and everybody went home, wondering about this mystery.

As I explained before, the subterranean hall was closed and sealed carefully; no robbers had been inside the hall for thousands of years. Also the sarcophagus itself was closed and sealed and on the sarcophagus there were the traces of flowers, which tend to prove that somebody was once buried there. Certainly Zecharia Goneim himself was the most disappointed one:he could not understand the situation. Days after the official opening he went back to the subterranean cave with a strong light and one of his assistants. He entered the sarcophagus through the small opening. When he came out again he was very confused and disoriented and nobody could talk with him anymore. He did not speak again to his friends; his humor had vanished. Days later he killed himself by jumping off one of the Nile bridges.

Two years later Goneim's assistant went down into the cave to search for clues to the mystery of Sechemhet. He pushed his head into the opened doorway; four days later he killed himself with an overdose of pills.

The Egyptian Administration for Antiquities then ordered the Tomb of Sechemhet to be closed. Since 1956 nobody was in there. When I arrived there in 1988 the Tomb was opened for me due to special connections. The old lock was totally rusted and we had to open the door with hammers.We saw the flower powder traces still there. Unfortunately I was not allowed to enter or even see into the sarcophagus. But the mystery of Sechemhet becomes even crazier.

In Switzerland we have the Federal Institute of Technology which discovered just a few months ago the most precise dating method with the use of carbon 14. Every university in the world knows that the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology has the most precise dating methods. They have dated the Tomb of Sechemhet as being 600 years older than when Sechemhet lived! How is this possible?

Was there a secret surrounding this tomb?A mystery which already existed in Sechemhet's time? Was the anonimity intentional?

The Roman historian Diodor of Sicily, visited Egypt some 2000 years ago. He published a series of 38 volumes about his trip. Concerning Egypt he made remarks which explode today like dynamite. First he quotes dates about the old Egypt which go back to 12,000 BC, and in that case Diodor is not alone. The other old historians quote similar dates. Then he says that once the gods descended from heaven and taught humanity in different disciplines. The gods themselves founded several cities in Egypt. When one of the gods died, his colleagues brought him to a place under the ground which had to be kept secret to mankind. I quote from Diodor:"The Egyptian priest told me that the gods themselves had forbidden the priests to tell anything about these subterreanean tombs. Those priests who said anything about them were in danger of their lives."

I suggest that at one time one of the gods was lying in that sarcophagus in the Sechemhet Tomb. When the work for the extraterrestrials was done and their generation spaceship was ready to continue their trip, they took the body of their colleague with them, dead or alive is not so important. They closed the empty sarcophagus again. The Pharaoh Sechemhet knew the old tradition that the body of a god was in the sarcophagus, but he and his priests were not allowed to speak about it. One day Sechemhet entered the old cavern deep beneath the rock and realized that there was no seal on the closed sarcophagus. He was afraid to open it because of the tradition that a god was in there. He had no way of knowing that the sarcophagus was then empty. So he put his own seal on it and also a bunch of flowers dedicated to the dead god in the sarcophagus. He closed the subterranean cave and also put his seal on the door. Forty-six centuries later scientists would discover the empty sarcophagus and also the fact that the subterranean cave had been dug 600 years before the time of Sechemhet.

Notes: (1) Over 20 years ago Erich von Daniken wrote in his books about genetic engineering and manipulation of genes in the DNA of human beings. He was severely chided and ridiculed for this by the astronomer Carl Sagan. Now the scientific community has accepted genetic engineering as a fact. See the series of articles on the subject in the Chicago Tribune of April 8 through April 15, 1990.

(2) See also Ancient Skies 8:2 and 10:3.

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